

STEM Innovation Academy of the Oranges

American Experiences
Ms. Buske and Mrs. Gengaro
Email: buskeali@orange.k12.nj.us; gengarka@orange.k12.nj.us
Website: www.orange.k12.nj.us

"Oh, the Places You'll Go!"

Course Description

The American Experiences course takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the role of history, geography, culture, social movements, political institutions, political philosophy, economic systems, etc. through the examination of historical contexts (namely the historical development of the United States, 1585 - 1877). Through these experiences, we will explore how Americans create meaning in their lives and make sense of the world in which we live. This integrated approach to the literary, political, social, and economic patterns of our past and present develops in us the capacity to work critically, independently, and collaboratively. We use literary interpretation, analysis, comparisons, and evaluations to read and respond to representative works of historical and cultural significance appropriate for grade 9. This course is truly interdisciplinary in that we are enriched by an analysis of the American experience from the perspective of both literature and history.

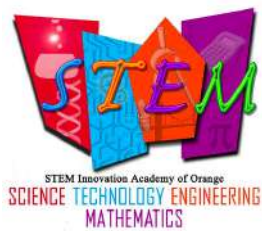
We grow in our knowledge of the fundamentals of two disciplines, English and Social Studies, as we develop a sophisticated and critical understanding of American history and culture and also learn how to use written language in effective and powerful ways. The strength of the Honors course of study lies in the extensions of research and tasks related to the analysis of substantive texts and includes real life projects incorporated into each marking cycle.

Instructors

Alison Buske, B.A.; Kathleen Gengaro, J.D., M.A., B.A.

Alison Buske received her B.A. in English and Secondary Education from The College of New Jersey and is currently enrolled in a Master's in Educational Leadership: Instruction program at The College of New Jersey.

Kathleen Gengaro received her B.A. in Political Science and Economics from Drew University, her Master's in Education from Seton Hall University and her Doctorate in Law from Seton Hall University School of Law.



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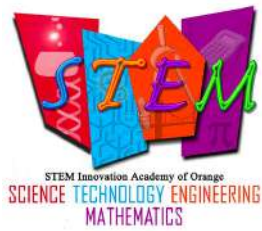
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Course Objectives

The ability to communicate is a crucial 21st century skill. This course is geared towards improving your ability to analyze text, articulating what you are reading, listening to others, contributing to discussions, and collaborating with others to improve concepts, ideas, and presentations. We will emphasize the acquisition and application of knowledge to prepare you for college, career, and civic life. We intentionally envision combined English and Social Studies instruction as an inquiry arc of interlocking and mutually reinforcing elements that address the intersection of ideas and learners. Our focus will be developing questions and planning inquiries, applying disciplinary tools and concepts, evaluating sources and using evidence, communicating conclusions, and taking informed action. These dimensions center on the use of questions to spark curiosity, guide instruction, deepen investigations, acquire rigorous content, and apply knowledge and ideas in real world settings to become active and engaged citizens in the 21st century. Active and responsible members of society, like us, are able to identify and analyze public problems, deliberate with other people about how to define and address issues, take constructive action together, reflect on their actions, create and sustain groups, and influence institutions both large and small. They vote, serve on juries when called, follow the news and current events, and participate in voluntary groups and efforts to change the community positively. Implementing these techniques to teach students to be able to act in these ways (as productive members of society) significantly enhances preparation for college and career.

Skills and Proficiencies

Literacy and Social Studies skills enable you to apply knowledge proficiency in a variety of contexts in repeated performances. In general, these skills promote the participation of studies in civic life and develop your ability to address societal conflicts and problems. The skills will be continuous and will be applied through a process of extension, expansion, and illumination in greater complexity that acknowledges your academic progress and growth.



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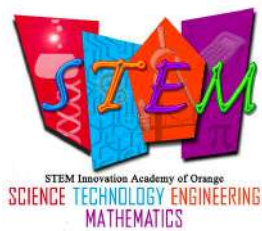
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Literacy skills, for example, include not only listening, reading, writing and speaking with comprehension and clarity, but also include defining, describing, and applying connections between and among people, places and events. You will differentiate fact from opinion, determine an author's purpose, develop an ability to use and apply abstract principles, and evaluate sources for validity and credibility to detect bias. You will also investigate, interpret, and analyze multiple historical and contemporary sources and viewpoints, and you will present solutions to problems by analyzing conflicts and evaluating persistent issues.

Critical thinking skills demonstrate the ability to reflect on content in order to form a solid judgment based on evidence and common sense. Critical thinkers gain knowledge through reading, observations, and experiences, which enable a person to identify relationships and determine the accuracy, clarity, reliability, relevance, and importance of what you learn. The practice of these skills requires the ability to conduct research, obtain information through a variety of technologies, and to interpret, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. You will locate and explore information, organize information in usable forms, use computer-based technology and media/communication technology, and interpret, analyze, and synthesize information. Further, you will be able to synthesize and create an argument, or counterargument, for these complex texts.

Learning skills and strategies that you will employ include: Decision-making (identifying situations, securing information, defining criteria, making decisions, taking action to implement the decisions, and examining and evaluating the consequences of those decisions); inquiry learning (being curious, asking powerful and complex questions, observing, investigating, and exploring to develop understanding, discussing and comparing with other works, and self-evaluating and reflecting to monitor progress); issue analysis (defining issues and identifying key opposing positions, determining conflicting values or beliefs, summarizing opposing positions, and stating ways to persuade others to adopt your position); and, problem-based learning (introducing and discussing a real world problem, collaboratively determining what is known and what must be learned, developing and articulating a problem statement, identifying



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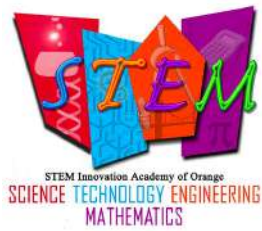
possible solutions, researching, analyzing and resolving potential solutions; and, presenting solutions with supporting documentation).

There are also personal interaction and civic engagement skills that you will use and with which you will become proficient. These include: personal (honesty, integrity, creativity, communication of personal feelings and beliefs, self-direction, flexibility, tolerance); collaborative (contribution to development of a supportive climate in a group, participation in a group, delegating duties, making decisions about actions in group settings); and, civic engagement (understand the fundamental process of democracy, identify and understand public and community issues, engage in dialogue with others who have different perspectives, act to accomplish public purposes, and exhibit moral and civic virtues).

Progression of Topics

Colonization and Settlement: North American colonial societies adapted European governmental, economic, and cultural institutions and ideologies to meet their needs in the New World. Our examination of the collision of the three worlds (Europe, Africa and the Americas) in the early history of our country will allow us to examine how cultures shape one another today.

Revolution and the New Nation: The war for independence was the result of growing ideological, political, geographic, economic, and religious tensions resulting from Britain's centralization policies and practices. The United States Constitution and Bill of Rights were designed to provide a framework for the American system of government, while also protecting individual rights. Debates about individual rights, states' rights, and federal power shaped the development of the political institutions and practices of the new Republic. This examination is critical because government exists to protect our basic rights of life, liberty, and property and when government no longer protects our basic rights, we as a society are free to create a new form of government. We will explore the contemporary implications of government that may not be protecting our basic rights.



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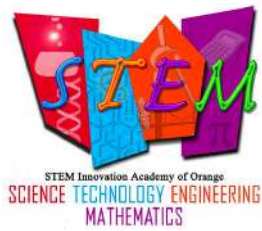
Expansion and Reform: Multiple political, social, and economic factors caused American territorial expansion. The rapid expansion and transformation of the American economy contributed to regional tensions, social reform, political compromises, and an expansion of democratic practices. We will examine how the United States may be perceived by other nations that are affected by our foreign policy.

Civil War and Reconstruction: The Civil War was caused by ideological, economic, and political differences about the future course of the nation. Efforts to reunite the country through Reconstruction were contested, resisted, and had long-term consequences. Through the analysis of events during this era, we will examine the current effects of regional perspectives and how they shape public opinion and action.

The Development of the Industrial United States: Technological developments and unregulated business practices revolutionized transportation, manufacturing, and consumption, and changed the daily lives of Americans. The Industrial Revolution and immigration had a powerful impact on labor relations, urbanization, the environment, cultural values, and created tensions between ethnic and social groups. We will examine how the United States evolved during this time, and how our history impacts events today.

The Emergence of Modern America--Progressive Reforms: Progressive reform movements promoted government efforts to address problems created by rapid industrialization, immigration, and unfair treatment of women, children, and minority groups. An expanding market for international trade promoted policies that resulted in America emerging as a world power. This time period allows us to critically think about America's imperialism and our current political attitudes.

The Emergence of Modern America--World War I: United States involvement in World War I affected politics, the economy, and political relations following the war. Analyzing these events



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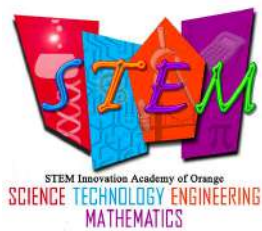
from civics, government, and human rights lenses allows an understanding of the reasons that the United States remained “neutral” in the beginning of the war, but why America eventually entered this global conflict and the immediate and long-term ramifications of World War I.

The Emergence of Modern America--Roaring Twenties: The 1920s is characterized as a time of social, economic, technological, and political change, as well as a time of emerging isolationism, racial and social tensions, and economic problems. Particular emphasis will be placed on the Great Migration, why the Great Migration led to heightened racial tensions, restrictive laws, a rise in repressive organizations, and an increase in violence, as well as a celebration of the impact of African American artists, writers, and musicians of the 1920s.

Our Routine

Our combined English and Social Studies course is the foundation for the ways in which we think, look at the world, and react to challenges. Therefore, it is imperative that we are physically and mentally present in our class meetings. In order to succeed and grow as individuals and as a collective whole, we must all come to class ready to work, willing to push our creative boundaries, and prepared to keep a positive attitude no matter the challenges because we are all capable of designing outcomes that are new and different. It is important to keep in mind that our work in the classroom extends beyond our classroom walls. We are an integral part of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math because we examine the ways in which we have a responsibility to ourselves and society. We will be taking many risks in our class when we collaborate, share ideas, participate in the brainstorming process, provide feedback to one another, and try new skills. Throughout our journey together, “it is not about trial and error. It is trying, learning, and trying again.”

With these ideas in mind, there are important expectations for each of us. We meet for 80 minutes on Monday, and 160 minutes on either Tuesday and Thursday or Wednesday and Friday,



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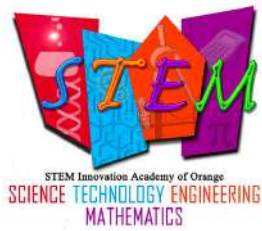
depending on individual schedules. Because we will be spending a considerable amount of time together, any absence will significantly impact your progress. However, we recognize that there may be times over the course of the year that you may be absent. If your absence is excused, you will be allowed two school days to complete missing work/tests for each day absent to receive full credit. You will not be entitled to make up work or tests missed during an unauthorized absence. Each assignment is provided online through our website and may be submitted electronically via Google classroom or as a shared Google doc. Teachers should be notified if you are going to be absent. Please contact us at buskeali@orange.k12.nj.us and gengarka@orange.k12.nj.us with any absences so that we may provide you with direction for the work that took place.

As scholars, we understand that even though we do work together in class, our projects often require work outside of the school day. Therefore, homework is mandatory. Homework will be posted online through our website. Further, we expect you to be honest in all of your academic work in order to learn and grow as responsible, ethical citizens. Any breach of this standard endangers the learning process and impugns the integrity of the entire school community. Our purpose is to prepare you to become lifelong learners, and dishonesty inhibits that process. No forms of personal and/or academic misrepresentation are permitted. Anyone, whether cheating alone or helping someone else to cheat, will be subject to disciplinary procedures. If you are in doubt about whether your work is academically honest, ask for guidance before turning in the assignment. For further information, please refer to the section on Academic Integrity in the STEM Innovation Academy of Orange Student/Parent Handbook.

Technology

Google classroom: Links to handouts, PowerPoints, readings and other class materials will be posted here and/or on the website. This, and Google docs, is also where you will upload assignments for submission and view teacher feedback.

Genesis: Grades will be available to students and parents through the Genesis portal. You are responsible for reviewing your grades at least weekly.



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Assessments

Our curriculum is guided by Project Based Learning, which is a teaching method in which we gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge. You will be working on projects throughout the year. Your grade will be based on the work that you do in class, homework, attendance, quizzes, tests and authentic assessments. Your grade will be weighted in accordance with the District policy:

- 10% Homework
- 20% Formative Assessments (quizzes, anecdotal notes, etc.)
- 20% Class Work (class participation, journals, logs, assignments, tasks, demonstrations, skill applications)
- 25% Summative Evaluations (tests, district assessments, unit assessments, etc.)
- 25% Authentic Assessments (portfolios, projects, performance assessments, 21st Century real world experiences)

Teacher Availability

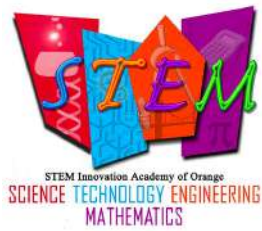
- Each day during Advisory (Tuesday through Friday)
- Lunch
- After school from 3:30-4:00 p.m. (except Mondays)
- We will be available after 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Friday by appointment.

Other Things to Know

If you arrive at class and the door is closed, that means that attendance has already been taken and you need to get a pass from the main office to ensure that the attendance is updated.

Missing and incomplete assignments can be viewed on Genesis. Homework and classwork assignments that are late for a period of more than 5 school days will not be accepted or given credit. Each day beyond the due date, late assignments will accrue a late penalty of 5 points. After 5 school days late, the highest grade that the late assignment (other than homework or classwork) is eligible to receive is 75. You will have advisory periods, office hours, lunch time, and before school to complete and submit late assignments (in addition to the timeframe given to complete the assignment).

We, the undersigned student and parent/guardian, have reviewed the expectations of the class as outlined in the syllabus and accept the terms and expectations as laid out.



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I, as the student, further understand that my parent may be contacted if I am found to be in default of my expectations, solely for the purpose of correcting the problem before my grades are put in jeopardy.

(student signature)

(name)

(date)

(parent signature)

(contact email)

(contact phone)

Internet access at home?

Yes

No

Any other information I should know: